

Sóley (Heidelberg, Kulturhaus Karlstorbahnhof, 2013-05-11)

Basic aspects of the concert:

3 musicians on stage: Sóley with two support musicians

Number of attendances: 200 or more? Sold-out?

Length of the concert: ~one hour + 1 additional track

Tracklist: not provided by the band. According to them they have a certain set that they stick to.

Price of the ticket: 18€

A strange and somewhat dislocated – the one thing that makes the Kulturhaus Karlstorbahnhof not stand out in this town – building had been the host for a strange set of musical contradictions. Being of Icelandic origin Sóley's music dares to shy away from conventional limitations and boundaries. A young project, whose general idea (not style!) of expression meanders around the boundaries of more established artists from the same country: Björk, Múm or Sigur Rós; to name some prominent examples.

Sóley comes over as a girlfriend with seemingly endless amount of insight, but without giving actually anything away of it. She throws simple rhythms at you, breaks it down to the simple repetition of a Buddha Machine and confusing noises, while in the end it is difficult to fully understand her; leaving aside the general aspect of man-woman interaction or rather confusion for a moment. Sadly, she remains on the level of playing music in a concrete and predictable manner. It is the pop that is cherished by her, the ability to deliver her thoughts and not an attempt to reach out to something mystical. She stops at a certain point and maybe demands from the audience to spin her thoughts further, to bring them onto a new level. A bit from Nadja woven into it all would have been and would be great indeed.

Three (Sóley & Jón Óskar (drums) & Albert (guitar/keys)) folks are on the stage, but none of them makes any attempt to move around too much. This indie-pop from these Icelandic musicians does not come over as too engaging or with a certain necessity “to get the crowd going”. Small jokes create an atmosphere of familiarity to an otherwise rather distant performance. She likes German, wants to get in touch with the crowd, compliments it for its good behaviour and dares to bring some easy jokes. Warm colours but a slightly muddy/unbalanced sound – yes, I am always nit-picky – help to set the mood and divert the attention.

The minutes are racing, while the music comes over rather slow and calm. There is no hectic, no abrupt changes in dynamics, there is no need to push it. Only towards the end the audience is moved and the strange harmonies are able to engage some to wobble to these. They learn about Sóley's cat, who had joined in with her in a song; another piece deals with a wedding; or finding love of a or for a bird; earlier on the 'clown' sought for some revenge. It is surreal and most certainly less nauseating compared with what Björk has to offer. In the end though, the distance remains and the band band vanishes all too soon. About an hour had been offered and then the half-mystical scenery vanishes into the cold air of Heidelberg. The thirsty audience rushes towards the bar, hopes to grab some obscure merchandise and maybe even dares to confront Sóley over her music; she promised to be there with the fans. I did not stay ... it had been a long day for me already and I was hoping to get some well deserved sleep and rest.

A solid performance it had been. But I would not have minded to hear an additional track or two.

(Note: a week earlier I had a different version on this type of thing in my mind, but after digging through the photographies I had made, I decided to fall back on this rather minimalist type of plain-text-thing.)

Questions, comments, hate mail and whatnot shall be directed at:

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